

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio
2016 - 2017 Additional Estimates
2 March 2017

DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

TOPIC: Complaint from the cyber security bid chair

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 2 March 2017, page 99-100)

QUESTION No.: AI-35

Senator KIM CARR: I see. Secretary, can you confirm that you received a complaint from the cybersecurity bid chair?

Ms Beauchamp: Yes, I can confirm that.

Senator KIM CARR: Thank you. Can you confirm that a formal apology was issued?

Ms Beauchamp: I can confirm that we went through a process of review to address the complaint and the applicant has been advised.

Senator KIM CARR: What were the review findings?

Ms Beauchamp: It confirmed what Mr Stirling said.

Senator KIM CARR: That you had a problem with the IT system. Was there anyone actually available in the office to receive the applications? Was that part of the problem—that everyone had gone home?

Mr Stirling: I am not aware that that was the case.

Senator Sinodinos: Is that what is being alleged by the people you spoke to—

Senator KIM CARR: There was only one formal complaint but there were others affected. How many bidders were affected?

Mr Stirling: I would have to you take that on notice to provide you with an accurate—

Senator KIM CARR: Was it more than one?

Mr Stirling: It was more than one.

Senator KIM CARR: Was it five? How many was it, roughly? I accept you are going to take it on notice to give me a formal answer, but several bidders were affected by this.

Mr Stirling: From memory, it was two or three.

Senator KIM CARR: And you are saying it was not because there was no-one there to actually answer the phone?

Mr Stirling: The telephone contact details that are on our application form are for the department's contact centre, which is an outsourced service provider. That organisation answers the phone from 8 am to 8 pm nationally—so it can be 10 pm or 11 pm, depending on the time difference—every day of the week.

Senator KIM CARR: So there were no officers available? It is an outsourced call centre?

Mr Stirling: There is absolutely an escalation process. I am not saying there were no departmental officers available. There is an escalation process from our contact centre to a range of departmental officers, depending on the issue that is—

Senator KIM CARR: Did that happen? Was there an escalation process that actually got someone on the phone?

Mr Stirling: I am not sure at what point in time you are referring to.

Senator KIM CARR: When it was discovered that people could not make a bid within the time line. That was why you extended it, wasn't it?

Mr Stirling: To facilitate getting applications in in a timely manner we extended the closing time to provide more opportunity for people to complete the application form.

Senator KIM CARR: At the registered close, people were not able to submit; isn't that the case?

Ms Beauchamp: It was fixed within the 24 hours, so people did end up submitting an application.

Senator KIM CARR: How often have you had to make a formal apology to a bidder in the CRC program? The program has been running since when? 1990?

Ms Beauchamp: Yes.

Senator KIM CARR: Is this the first time you have had an ICT problem where people could not submit in the appropriate time? You are saying three bidders—

Mr Stirling: I said I would take on notice the details.

Senator KIM CARR: But you think maybe three. I am not holding you to that precise number. You are not misleading the Senate. I am just saying that there were about three. They were significant bidders, weren't they? How much money was involved in each bid, roughly?

Mr Stirling: I would need to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Four of the seven applicants were affected.

Funding requested by the seven applicants was \$335 million. Funding requested by the four affected applicants was \$190 million.